

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, OVIP (PRESIDENT LEONE), IT

SUBJECT: PROPOSED BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY SECRETARY KISSINGER
FOR ITALIAN MEDIA

SUMMARY: BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY SECRETARY FOR
ITALIAN MEDIA COVERING LEONE VISIT WOULD BE EXTREMELY
HELPFUL IN DEALING WITH SERIOUS AND GROWING CONCERN
HERE REGARDING ITALY'S NATO INVOLVEMENT AND US CREDIBILITY.
END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENT LEONE'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES COMES
AT A TIME OF RISING SPECULATION AND CONCERN OVER NATO'S
FUTURE AND ITALY'S ROLE IN IT. SUCH CONCERN IS BY NO
MEANS CONFINED TO TRADITIONAL OPPONENTS OF NATO, SINCE
THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT AMONG ITALIAN POLITICAL
CIRCLES THAT RELOCATION OF ANY NATO BASES TO ITALY AT
THIS TIME WOULD HAVE SERIOUS POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS
FOR RULING COALITION. NEVERTHELESS, UNDERLYING
IMPORTANCE OF ITALY TO NATO AND VICE VERSA IS NOT
GETTING FULL AIRING HERE BECAUSE OF STORM OF CURRENT
SPECULATION ARISING FROM RECENT MEDITERRANEAN
DEVELOPMENTS.

THIS SITUATION FURTHER COMPLICATED BY EXTREMELY
CRITICAL COMMENTS IN PRESS OVER ALLGED US ENGINEERING
OF COUP WHICH TOPPLED ALLENDE IN CHILE: ITALIAN LEFT
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IDENTIFIES STRONGLY AND EMOTIONAL WITH CHILEAN LEFT.

NY TIMES ARTICLE ALLEGING CIA INVOLVEMENT IMPACTED IN ITALIAN MEDIA ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF CHILEAN COUP WHICH ADDED CONSIDERABLE FORCE TO ALREADY SUBSTANTIAL SPATE OF ANNIVERSARY ARTICLES CARRIED BY LEFTAOF-CENTER PRESS. THE RESULT IS THAT WE ARE ONCE AGAIN IN SITUATION WHERE US CREDIBILITY AND MOTIVATIONS ARE BEING CALLED INTO QUESTION. WE EXPECT SUCH QUESTIONING TO BE INCREASINGLY STRIDENT AND CRITICAL. FOR THESE REASONS, A BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY THE SECRETARY WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MOST OF THE LEADING ITALIAN JOURNALISTS WHO INTERPRET AMERICA TO ITALY WOULD BE A MOST SALUTARY EVENT. THE ANTICIPATED NUMBER WOULD BE ABOUT 35, BUT COULD BE MADE SMALLER IF THIS TOO UNWIELDY. EMBASSY FEELS STRONGLY THAT SESSION WITH SECRETARY EMPHASIZING BASIC SECURITY QUESTIONS WHICH AFFECT ITALY AS WELL AS SUBSTANTIVE DIRECTION US FOREIGN POLICY WOULD HELP REASSURE FRIENDS THAT WE MAKING CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOLUTIONS OF BASIC PROBELMS. WOULD ALSO BE EFFECTIVE REJOINDER TO US CRITICS WHO EFFECTIVELY QUESTIONING US CREDIBILITY AND ARE ONCE AGAIN CRANKING UP FOR A FIELD DAY AT OUR EXPENSE. FINALLY--AND FAR FROM LEAST--A CLEAR DELINEATION OF US CONTINUED CONCERN REGARDING SOVIET THREAT WOULD IMPLY USEFUL SIGNALS TO BE MIXED INTO ITALIAN POLITICAL DEBATE ON POSSIBLE EVENTUAL ENTRY OF COMMUNISTS INTO GOVERNMENT. VOLPE

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